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RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

The Foundational Character of Authoritative Sources in the History of Christianity and Judaism

EDITED BY

JUDITH FRISHMAN, WILLEMIEN OTTEN
AND GERARD ROUWHORST

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CHAPTER FOUR

HOW MODERN IS RELIGION IN MODERNITY?

Staf Hellemans

p 76-94

No other period in history has challenged the authority of religious sources as the modern. This explains why the analysis of modernity has been placed at the beginning of our proceedings, rather than at the end, where chronologically it belongs.[1] The problem of modernity is a much wider one, however. Modern societies are fundamentally different from pre-modern societies. This is evident in the political system, which is organised along state lines, and an economy geared towards mass production for the world market. The fundamental break with pre-modern social formations is equally clear in other areas. We can think, for example, of the process whereby artists acquire the autonomy to give free rein to their creativity; the generalised school-based system of education; a familial system premised on love and interpersonal affection; and the rapid development of the sciences, mass media and technology. Nothing remains as of old.

What about religion? It may seem, at first sight, that little has changed in this area. The same world religions that have dominated the religious scene for a thousand years, still do so. Moreover, the leaders of these religions place particular emphasis on continuity with the past. Yet this initial appearance is misleading. In the field of religion, the emergence and further development of modernity has led to a break with the pre-modern past, which is just as radical as the changes affecting the aforementioned, so-called modern sectors, like the economy, politics, science and art. Religion has not been modernised to a lesser extent than those other areas.

I shall attempt to elucidate this thesis of the unqualified modernity of religion in general, and the world religions in particular, in two parts. The aim of the first section, is to show of what these fundamental changes consist, as they affect religion in and through modernity, and to clarify the meaning of the concept 'religious modernisation'. Thereafter, I want to elaborate on the discussion that forms the wider context within which my position is to be understood. That discussion concerns the relation between religion and modernity. I shall suggest that the modernisation theory of, among others, Franz-Xaver Kaufmann and Karl Gabriel, be radicalised into a theory of religious modernisation.

[1] I would like to thank Gerrit Brand for his translation of this article from German

I. *Modernity and Religion*

In contrast to the appearance of continuity, I shall point, here, to the depth of the transformations that religion, like the other social sectors, exhibits. These changes, which I subsume under the concept of 'religious modernisation', occur at two levels. First, a new, modern religious system or, as I shall call it, a modern religious field, emerges. Secondly, the existing world religions themselves are transformed, or modernised, fundamentally.

1.1 The Modernisation of the Religious Field

Normally, when we speak of religion and the changes affecting it in the modern age, we think of a particular religion, most often Christianity or one of its denominations. That is too one-sided; we should always keep in mind the wider religious space within which these religions operate as well. Following Bourdieu, I would suggest that this space be designated a 'religious field'.[2] The religious field is, in the truest sense of the word, a very broad and disordered field. First to be noticed are, of course, the familiar, institutionalised major religions. However, at play in this field are also many smaller, geographically and/or numerically limited religious movements, and an even greater number of individuals, who regard themselves as religiously inspired, advertising their religious wares (here, it is irrelevant whether they operate on their own or within the framework of a larger religion). Less visible, but equally part of the religious field,

[2] P. Bourdieu, 'Génèse et structure du champ religieux', *Revue Française de Sociologie* 12/3 (1971) 295–334.

are the family religions and the countless activities of people who respond, in one way or another, to the range of religious options on offer.

Thus, the modernisation of religion in the singular, or religion in general, can be specified as the modernisation of the religious field. In order to reconstruct the modernisation of the religious field, then, one would have to describe very accurately, for each epoch, the actors involved and their mutual relations, as well as the interactions of the religious field with other spheres. This cannot be undertaken here but a brief indication of what is intended will be offered. During the Middle Ages, the religious field was characterised by the central presence of Christianity. We know by now, however, that we should not think of that field as monolithically Christian under the leadership of the pope and a papist church – as was thought during the nineteenth century. Christianity was itself extremely fragmented geographically and with respect to class divisions, and bound up with the feudal order. Moreover, the church of the clerics did not stand alone in the field, but was connected, through complex associations and combinations, with local religions. Having said this, I still think that the world religion 'Christianity' occupied indeed an exceptionally prominent place in Europe. In medieval China, the religious field was far more multifaceted. There were not only several world religions (Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism) and combinations of those world religions, but the presence of local religions and of the important family religions was also much more pronounced than in Europe.

With the advent of modernity, the religious field changed fundamentally. Let me mention briefly the most significant changes. The various pre-modern religious fields, which were isolated from one another, as were the civilisations surrounding them, were taken up, by the pull of globalisation, into a religious field that operated worldwide. That the action radii of the world religions were further extended during modernity, so that they can only rightly be called world religions from that moment onwards, also means that they have lost, or stand to lose, their monopoly as the established translocal religions of their places of origin. Permanent rivalry replaces the pre-modern monopoly or oligopoly, the more so because various new religions and religious movements appear on the scene. After all, in modernity, the latter can be sustained more readily. Thirdly, in the process of modernisation, the religions were 'religionised', i.e.,

focused on spiritual concerns, and on the use of purely religious means. Fourthly, larger groups of people now openly distance themselves from any form of religion, even criticising and rejecting it. In the fifth place, local and regional differentiations, which formerly reigned supreme, have been levelled out by increased possibilities of travel and communication.

As a result of all these changes, the religious field has been completely restructured. It now acquires the contours of a religious marketplace, where a multitude of religious groupings compete world-wide for individualised consumers, who experiment with every conceivable form of religion or irreligion. This alone means that the position and functioning of Christianity in Europe has changed fundamentally.

1.2 The Modernisation of Particular Religions

However, apart from this indirect effect of modernisation of the religious field, we also have to determine – and this is the real issue at stake here – how far the great world religions, which, after all, originated and flourished in pre-modern, agrarian civilisations, were themselves modernised. Are the world religions affected only superficially by modernity, or are they essentially recast in and through modernity?

These questions have been hotly disputed since the Enlightenment, both in Christianity and in Judaism. In very broad terms, three positions can be identified in that debate, although further distinctions are possible, and indeed, in more detailed historiography, essential.[3] The first category, that of atheists and those who seek to diminish the power of the church – I shall call them simply opponents of the church –, refuse to acknowledge any modernity in the church. They expect that, with increasing modernisation, the church will be progressively marginalised. The second category, the orthodox (or conservative, or traditionalist) champions of the church, constitute more or less the mirror image of the opponents of the church. They also judge the church to be devoid of any modernity, but then on religious grounds, namely the precedence of divine revelation. They evaluate modernity negatively, and regard it as something that could be overcome, if only all good religious forces would unite. The third

[3] See e.g. V. Viaene, *Belgium and the Holy See from Gregory XVI to Pius IX (1831–1859); Catholic Revival, Society and Politics in 19th-Century Europe*, Louvain 2001.

category, that of liberal, enlightened Jews, Catholics and Protestants, and their progressive heirs, take an in-between position. They welcome modernity, yet continue to adhere to their religion. They plead for a liberal, enlightened religion that corresponds to modernity. I shall therefore refer to them as (liberal) reformers.

Between these three parties – the opponents of the church, the orthodox and the reformers – the fate of religion in modernity has been heavily contested for the past two centuries. This three-way contest was also fought out in the theoretical arena, where it was conceived in terms of two basic dilemmas. Since the three-way struggle has lost much of its social relevance since the 1960s, the time has now also come, in my view, to leave both those dilemmas behind.

The first dilemma, then, was fought out between the reformers and the orthodox. Both parties are of the opinion that there is only one proper response to modernity on the part of religion – either an enlightened, modern revisionism, or an anti-modern conservatism. Thus they propose two diametrically opposed strategies, namely adaptation and resistance to modernity respectively. Today, this dilemma can no longer be maintained. Against the orthodox position, it must be said that the world religions, even in their orthodox conception, have changed fundamentally in and through modernity. Contrary to the reformers' view, however, such modernisation need not go in one direction, the liberal, only. On the contrary, many diverse forms of modernisation, some of which are orthodox, are possible.

In order to grasp this accurately, we need to take leave of the second dilemma too: the idea that religion and modernity oppose one another as two mutually exclusive, hostile forces. This second dilemma provides the basis for the first, the choice between adaptation and resistance. Rather than playing religion and modernity off against one another, I would like to argue that modernity is in fact the foundation of religion in modern society. After all, modernity constitutes the social context within which we all move. Over against the proponents of orthodoxy, it should be made clear that our religious ideas and actions provide topical and active, creative responses to the possibilities and challenges of modernity. Put differently: The orthodox too are reformers, albeit unwittingly and unwillingly; only, they are not liberal reformers. Over against the reformers, who embrace modernity as a great good, it should be pointed out that modernity can no longer be regarded, without qualification, as an ideal state to be striven after, but should rather be understood as a

specific social formation with characteristic structural properties (e.g. functional differentiation) and characteristic ideals (e.g. human rights), but also characteristic misadventures (some catchwords are: World War, Holocaust, totalitarianism). Modernity should be seen as the social form encapsulating our time, and as such, as unavoidable. It has already an impressive history of no less than two hundred years behind it, to which should be added a transitional period of another few centuries, namely early modernity.[4]

From this perspective, religion appears as a constantly changing sphere of modern society, which is equally subject to change. This also applies to the world religions, which have their origins in pre-modern times. Rather than deducing the attributes of a world religion in a static way from the ideal-typical difference with modernity – thus contrasting tradition with change, or faith with science – the modernisation thesis invites a very detailed analysis of how the religions respond to modernity; how they relate continually and creatively to the challenges and possibilities, the models and ideas, the dynamics and problems presenting themselves in modernity; and how they thus reconstitute themselves ever again. Just as persons conduct themselves in their social milieu, thus also religions in their modern milieu. Insofar as they continually engage their modern milieu, they modernise themselves. In this respect, the religions after 1800 are radically different from their pre-modern forms, although they still appeal to their religious traditions and to the past, and even if they proclaim loudly their aversion to modernity. Thus, rather than opposing religion to modernity, the new perspective would have us focus our analyses on the diverse and interconnected processes of religious modernisation. Until quite recently, this concept of religious modernisation could only be viewed as a contradiction in terms.[5]

Let me briefly illustrate this approach of religious modernisation with reference to a case study, the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is a particularly interesting example in this connection, because while, on the one hand, it has been highly apprehensive of modernity, it has also, at the same time, operated very successfully in the modern world, up until the 1960s. In the nineteenth century, it was transformed from a church of the nobility,

[4] E. Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book; The Structure of Human History*, London 1988.
[5] S. Hellemans, *Religieuze modernisering*, Utrecht 1997. See also L. Diotallevi, *Religione, chiesa e modernizzazione; il caso italiano*, Rome 2000.

stratified along feudal lines, to a centralised mass organisation, striving for the intensive socialisation and mass mobilisation of its adherents. In fact, it was the first mass organisation of modernity, long before this type of group formation became more widespread after the 1880s. After 1880, under Pope Leo XIII and his successors, the mass organisation model was extended to secular spheres as well. Several powerful Catholic lay organisations (social, cultural and recreational organisations, and even political parties) came into being. This gave rise to much internal friction – e.g. between the bishops and the leaders of the lay associations –, but it also brought the Catholic Church and Catholicism unrivalled power and influence.

Next to church organisation, other aspects of 19th and 20th century Roman Catholicism also underwent successful religious modernisation. Here, we can think of the world-wide mission, associated with the march of colonialism, the deliberate furthering of neo-Thomism and Natural Law teaching as a comprehensive epistemology and theology, competing with positivism,[6] the propagation of neo-Gothic style[7] and Gregorian church music, and the development of a Catholic social teaching, proclaimed by the Popes.[8]

Central to this perspective of religious modernisation is – to repeat it once more – that modernisation and the modern are no longer identified with enlightened, liberal or progressive orientations. The orthodox, conservatives and traditionalists are no less modern than the liberals and progressives. The former are equally caught up in modernity; they simply give a wholly different evaluation of it. This has been, and still is, no different as far as the Catholic Church is concerned: caught up in modernity, yet simultaneously judging it critically, to the point of rejecting it. One could say that, over the past two centuries, excluding the few years surrounding the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has been modernised under the banner of anti-modernism. We should guard against presenting this anti-modernist modernisation as an intolerable tension. That

[6] P. Thibault, *Savoir et Pouvoir; Philosophie thomiste et politique cléricale au XIX^e siècle*, Québec 1972; F.-X. Kaufmann, *Theologie in soziologischer Sicht*, Freiburg 1973, 78–92.

[7] J. de Maeyer, L. Verpoest, *Gothic Revival; Religion, Architecture and Style in Western Europe 1815–1914*, Leuven 2000.

[8] S. Hellemans, 'Is There a Future for Catholic Social Teaching after the Waning of Ultramontane Mass Catholicism?', in: J.S. Boswell, F.P. McHugh, J. Verstraeten (eds), *Catholic Social Thought; Twilight or Renaissance*, Leuven 2000, 13–32.

would be just as inaccurate as presenting the artistic *avant garde*, with their criticism of modernity and bourgeois culture, as such. The anti-modernist modernisation of the Roman Catholic Church represents an exceptionally successful strategy.

II. *The Debate on Modernity and the Modernisation of Religion*

When, during the first half of the 1990s, I was pondering the perspective of religious modernisation, as a follow-up to my study of the history of pillarisation (or ideological subcultures) in Europe,[9] I still had the feeling of being more or less alone in entertaining this idea. In recent years, however, many European authors have given a prominent place in their work to the relation between religion and modernity, and the possible modernisation of religion. This is done, for example, by Urs Altermatt in Switzerland,[10] Franz-Xaver Kaufmann[11] and Karl Gabriel[12] in Germany, Claude Langlois[13] and Danièle Hervieu-Léger[14] in France, and Diotallevi in Italy.[15] Outside Europe, Peter Geschiere has investigated 'the modernity of witchcraft' – thus the title of his book – in Africa.[16] The historian Wolfgang Reinhard wondered already in 1977, whether the contra-reformation should

[9] S. Hellemans, *Strijd om de moderniteit; Sociale bewegingen en verzuiling in Europa sinds 1800*, Leuven 1990.

[10] U. Altermatt, *Katholizismus und Moderne; Zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte der Schweizer Katholiken im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Zürich 1989.

[11] F.-X. Kaufmann, *Kirche begreifen; Analysen und Thesen zur gesellschaftlichen Verfassung des Christentums*, Freiburg/Breisgau 1979; F.-X. Kaufmann, 'Religion und Modernität', in: J. Berger (ed.), *Die Moderne – Kontinuität und Zäsuren* (Soziale Welt, Sonderband 4), Göttingen 1986, 283–307; F.-X. Kaufmann, *Wie überlebt das Christentum?*, Freiburg 2000.

[12] K. Gabriel, *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne*, Freiburg/Breisgau 1992.

[13] C. Langlois, 'Le catholicisme au XIXe siècle entre modernité et modernisation', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 79/3 (1991) 325–336.

[14] D. Hervieu-Léger, 'Religion and Modernity in the French Context; For a New Approach to Secularization', *Sociological Analysis* 51/1 (1990) 15–25; D. Hervieu-Léger, 'La transmission religieuse en modernité: éléments pour la construction d'un objet de recherche', *Social Compass* 44/1 (1997) 131–143; D. Hervieu-Léger, *La religion en mouvement; Le pélérin et le converti*, Paris 1999.

[15] L. Diotallevi, 'The Territorial Articulation of Secularization in Italy; Social Modernization, Religious Modernization', *ASSR* 107 (1999) 77–108; L. Diotallevi, *Religione, chiesa e modernizzazione; il caso italiano*, Rome 2000.

[16] P. Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft; Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, Charlottesville & London 1997.

not be understood as modernisation.[17] The literature remains rather too vast to be surveyed, but one thing is certain: The question of the relation between religion and modernity, and of the modernity and modernisation of religion, is very topical.

Thus, on closer inspection, there is a wide variety of writings on this theme. It is unavoidable that several strongly divergent approaches to the study of modernity and modernisation are extant. Moreover, reflection on the relation between religion and modernity has undergone a noticeable change over the last few decades. The great quarrel of nearly two centuries between opponents and defenders of the church is over. Together with the decline of the large churches, the position of the reformers has also weakened since the 1970s. This new historical situation inspires researchers to reconceptualise the relation between religion and modernity. In my view, the central question in the whole discussion has been the extent to which the orthodox churches and religious movements can be said to belong to modernity. It would seem that the discussion is increasingly tending towards the radical position that I defend: the unqualifiedly modern character of all religion in modernity, and the corresponding necessity to reconstruct the history of religion in modernity as religious modernisation.

For the sake of further clarification, I shall briefly mention the main stages in the debate. Since discussion of the theme of modernisation is especially lively in the German language area, with Urs Altermatt as a major participant in the debate, I shall draw attention mainly to the German authors.

2.1 Religion and the Modernisation Theories of the 1950s and 60s

Since the beginning of modernity, the question of how the transition from the pre-modern to the modern, and the development of modernity itself, is to be interpreted, has consistently been a central theme of research, to which classical thinkers, from Saint-Simon, through Marx and Spencer, to Weber have devoted themselves. Yet it was only during the 1950s and 60s that this theme came to be

[17] See W. Reinhard, 'Gegenreformation als Modernisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 68 (1977) 226-252.

known under the motto of 'modernisation'. These modernisation theories no longer concerned themselves exclusively with the emergence of modernity in the West, but especially with the modernisation of Third World countries.[18] Such modernisation theories typically deal with economic and political modernisation. Often, an aspect of the concurrent social modernisation is also reflected upon. Even cultural and psychological modernisation came to be spoken of. Nowhere, however, – i.e. as far as I have been able to ascertain – is any mention made of religious modernisation. Religion was simply identified, in the customary fashion, with tradition, and both in turn, were contrasted with modernity.

The only potential link recognised, was that suggested by the so-called Weberian thesis. In his 1904 book, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, Weber had pointed out that the Protestant ethic of duty and work made an important contribution to the emergence of capitalism. However, as he stated in conclusion: 'Triumphant capitalism, since it rests upon mechanical bases, no longer required this support'.[19] Following Weber's lead, the search was on in the 1960s for ethical systems of a religious kind that have blazed, or might blaze, the trail for modernity in the Third World.[20] There was not the slightest doubt, however, that in the Third World, as in the West before it, religion would thereby have outplayed its role. Thus, in the modernisation theories of the 1950s and 60s, a combination of religion and modernity, and therefore religious modernisation, was excluded from the very start.

2.2 The Liberal Reconciliation of Religion (Churches) and Triumphant Modernity

As already indicated, however, there has always been, parallel to this, a notable school of thought seeking to link religion and modernity, namely that of the liberal reformers. These reformers, or modernists, were especially well represented in the Protestant countries, and were

[18] For a critical survey, see H.-U. Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte*, Göttingen 1974.

[19] M. Weber, 'Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus', in: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Bd. I, Tübingen 1920, 204.

[20] See e.g. R.N. Bellah (ed.), *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia*, New York-London 1965; D.E. Smith (ed.), *Religion and Political Modernization*, New Haven & London 1974.

even occasionally dominant in middle-class and intellectual circles. After a temporary decline in the post-1914 period, the reformers' star rose again after the Second World War, and especially during the 1960s. In Catholicism too, the way of liberal reform was now entered upon.

During the 1960s, 'modern' was a fashionable term, which was also used extensively in everyday discourse: modern art, modern design and dress, modern means of transport and communication, modern technologies, even modern (industrially produced) bread, and of course modern sociology.[21] Since, at the time, the churches were undergoing far-reaching changes, and shared in the innovative mood that characterised society in general, it is only logical that here too, the ideal of a modern church enjoyed much currency.

Robert Bellah's impressive essay on 'religious evolution' may serve as an example from the sociology of religion.[22] Bellah arranges the plethora of human societies and religions that have existed during human history into just five types: primitive, archaic, historic, early modern and modern religions and societies. In stratified agricultural societies and the early civilisations the archaic religions took over from their primitive predecessors. Similarly, the historic world religions originated together with advanced agricultural civilisations, which are called historic societies due to the dissemination of the art of writing. So too modern religion would assert itself in modern society after 1800. Although this was to be a drawn-out process, liberal Protestantism was already heading that way, and in Bellah's view, Catholicism was following that lead through the Second Vatican Council. As in the past, many of the more orthodox religions would not be prepared to take this step. Thus they would condemn themselves, like the archaic religions in the period of the world religions, to increasing marginalisation. Structurally, according to Bellah's thesis, modern society demands a modern, enlightened-liberal religion. It is characterised by the increasingly abstract nature of representations of the transcendent, by a greater awareness of self-projections, by the stress on the individual character of the religious quest ('My mind is my church'), by ecumenical openness, etc.

[21] Cf. the influential textbook by J.A.A. van Doorn & C.J. Lammers, *Moderne sociologie*, Utrecht 1959.

[22] R.N. Bellah, 'Religious Evolution', *American Sociological Review* 29/3 (1964) 359-374.

That an enlightened, individual-oriented religion is the only kind that corresponds to a modern society, understood as enlightened, dynamic and scientific, was the underlying conviction of most scholars and theologians in the 1960s, and of many other people in the years that followed. This thesis of the liberal-religious reformers made a positive link between religion and modernity, but it allowed only for one kind of religious modernisation, namely the liberal-enlightened kind. All the remaining religions were rejected as pre-modern and backward, and thus outdated or of no interest. Moreover, already linked to this idea was a clear strategic direction: Liberalise the churches! Especially in the Catholic Church, which until then had been massively and outspokenly opposed to the modernists, the liberal-religious idea and strategy was taken up with much enthusiasm. The idea was translated into a distinctively Catholic catchword ('aggiornamento') and, thanks to the Second Vatican Council, also grounded in doctrine (cf. the Council documents *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Gaudium et Spes*). The change of direction made by the leadership of the Catholic Church in 1968 with the publication of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, evoked an internal and vehement struggle in the church, which has not been settled to this day.

2.3 Partial Modernisation: Modern Means to Anti-Modern Ends

The idea that high modernity, understood in liberal-enlightened terms, will allow only a corresponding religion, lost credibility in the 1970s, and especially the 1980s. All developments in the religious sphere during those years spoke against the thesis of the liberal-religious reformers. On the one hand, the large churches, which had been liberalised precisely in the hope of playing a leading role in modern society, were in a shambles due to intense internal dissension and, more importantly still, the rapidly growing wave of secularisation. On the other hand, the smaller orthodox and fundamentalist churches and movements, which according to the expectations of the reformers should have fallen by the wayside, were hardly affected by secularisation. In some cases, they even experienced growth. Thanks to more efficient organisation, they also entered the public domain with renewed strength, so that they could, for example, secure the election of the conservative Ronald Reagan as US President in 1980. Around the same time, the anti-modernist religious movements of the non-Western world, from North Africa to the Pacific,

began their advance. In 1979, the Shah of Persia was ousted through a revolution led by the Islamic leader Khomeiny. Thus it became clear that the survival, and even growth, of the traditionalist churches and religious movements was a world-wide phenomenon. It was discussed especially under the label of 'fundamentalism'. In the 1980s and early 1990s, it grew into a leading research field (see especially Riesebrodt,[23] Kepel[24] – under the revealing title 'The wrath of God' – and the large scale 'Fundamentalism Project' of Marty and Appleby).[25]

The unexpected, world-wide boom of orthodox and fundamentalist churches and movements confronted liberal-minded researchers with an unavoidable question: How is this unthinkable outcome, which seems, after all, to be so fundamentally opposed to modernity, to be explained? There were basically two answers. Firstly, attention was drawn to the ambivalence of modernity. Here, the critique that had become familiar since the 1968 student movement and the rediscovery of Marxist thought, was taken up. The dark side of modernity was now stressed much more than during the 1950s and early 1960s, a period during which modernity had been exclusively associated with progress. According to the new interpretation, then, orthodox and fundamentalist movements owed their continued viability to this dark side of modernity: Inequality remained a serious problem; existential uncertainty prevailed; traditional communities and norms were on the decline, . . . Secondly, those in the orthodox and fundamentalist movements had become adept at exploiting certain elements of modernity. They employed the most recent technologies without inhibition: Arch-conservative preachers in the United States made extensive use of television; prior to the revolution, Khomeiny's sermons were secretly disseminated in Iran via millions of audio-tapes. Moreover, the movements were by no means exclusively comprised of the marginalised, the so-called 'losers of modernity'. They also included college graduates, young people, and members of the middle-class.[26] These movements, so the conclusion ran, could not be dismissed as purely pre-modern and backward-looking.

[23] M. Riesebrodt, *Fundamentalismus als patriarchalische Protestbewegung; Amerikanische Protestanten (1910–1928) und iranische Shiiten (1961–1979) im Vergleich*, Tübingen 1990.
[24] G. Kepel, *La revanche de Dieu; Chrétiens, juifs et musulmans à la reconquête du monde*, Paris 1991.
[25] M.E. Marty, S.R. Appleby, *The Fundamentalism Project*, Chicago 1991–1995.

Thus, the question of the extent to which these movements are to be regarded as modern became relevant once more. Here, as in the debate on religion and modernity in general, three main positions (with a range of possible perspectives in-between) were adopted. Firstly, one could deny the modern aspect, and focus exclusively on the resistance against modernity propounded by these movements. This 'enemy of modernity' model is the most popular media presentation. A second approach is to recognise that these movements operate on a modern basis, and that they do so by focusing their energies on the conservative extremes in the struggle over the development of modernity. Bruce Lawrence[27] and Martin Riesebrodt[28] lean towards this position. The third perspective is an intermediate position, and consists of granting a partial modernity to orthodoxy and fundamentalism: The content of their worldviews is strongly anti-modern, but the factors that give rise to it, and the means employed in its service, can be thoroughly modern (thus, e.g., Bryan Wilson on new religious movements,[29] and James D. Hunter on American evangelicalism[30]).

Like those studying fundamentalism, European students of Catholicism were led by the new situation – a weakened reformism and a strengthened orthodoxy – to analyse pre-1960s Catholicism anew, no longer judging it only as backward-looking and anti-modern. Urs Altermatt is one of them.[31] In his book *Katholizismus und Moderne*, he points explicitly to the ambivalence of modernity,[32] describes Catholicism as 'anti-modernism with modern means',[33] and thus infers the 'ambivalence of anti-modernism'.[34] Although, in his view, the modernisation of Western societies indeed constitutes the historical framework for the history of Catholicism, he nevertheless interprets that history as 'a defensive strategy aiming at a half-hearted adaptation

[27] B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God; The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*, San Francisco 1989.
[28] M. Riesebrodt, *Fundamentalismus als patriarchalische Protestbewegung.*
[29] B. Wilson, 'The New Religions; Preliminary Considerations', in: E. Barker (ed.), *New Religious Movements*, New York 1982, 23–24.
[30] D. Hunter, *American Evangelicalism; Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity*, New Brunswick 1983.
[31] U. Altermatt, *Katholizismus und Moderne; Zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte der Schweizer Katholiken im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Zürich 1989.
[32] Altermatt, *Katholizismus und Moderne*, 49.
[33] Altermatt, *Katholizismus und Moderne, ibid.*
[34] Altermatt, *Katholizismus und Moderne*, 60.

to modernity'.[35] Thus, for Altermatt, Catholicism prior to 1960 was only partly modern. Or rather, up until 1850–1870, Catholicism was thoroughly non-modern, but with the establishment of Catholic mass organisations, 'a part of modernity' was planted 'in the Catholic milieu',[36] and, thanks to those organisations, Catholicism was modernised gradually, imperceptibly and, as it were, against the will of the church.

One of the merits of Altermatt's book is that it goes beyond the position of the liberal reformers, who saw in ultramontanist Catholicism nothing but an anti-modern bulwark. He points explicitly to the partial modernisation – a concept coined by Rüschemeier[37] – of ultramontanist Catholicism, yet, despite this, his position remains very close to that of the liberal reformers.

2.4 An Approach in Terms of Modernisation Theory: Kaufmann and Gabriel

I would like to conclude this survey of the positions that have been adopted concerning the relation between religion and modernity, by discussing two authors, Franz-Xaver Kaufmann[38] and his student, Karl Gabriel.[39] They too continue to subscribe to the intermediate position, 'between tradition and (post-)modernity',[40] yet they pay much more attention to the modern side as well as to the modernisation of religion. After 1800, they argue, the Catholic Church not only employed modern means to anti-modern ends, but reinvented itself completely by constantly integrating modern social developments.[41] The relation of ultramontanist Catholicism to modernity is neither purely defensive, nor merely instrumental, but rather existential. Modernity provides the very foundation for Catholicism's new mode of existence. Thus, modernity is promoted to the inescapable

[35] Altermatt, *Katholizismus und Moderne*, 383.
[36] Altermatt, *Katholizismus und Moderne*, 62.
[37] D. Rüschemeyer, 'Partielle Modernisierung', in: W. Zapf (ed.), *Theorien des sozialen Wandels*, Köln 1970, 282–296.
[38] Kaufmann, *Kirche begreifen*; Kaufmann, 'Religion und Modernität'; Kaufmann, *Wie überlebt das Christentum?*
[39] K. Gabriel, F.-X. Kaufmann (eds), *Zur Soziologie des Katholizismus*, Mainz 1980; K. Gabriel, *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne*, Freiburg/Breisgau 1992.
[40] See Gabriel, *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne*.

context with which Catholicism, like every religion, must come to terms, willingly or not.

Starting from this perspective, Kaufmann investigates the 'churchification' ('Verkirchlichung') of Catholicism, in his groundbreaking book of 1979, *Kirche begreifen*. The concept of churchification refers to the elevation of the ecclesiastical organisation and the Roman centralisation, as well as to the increasing emphasis of the church purely on religion in the 19th and 20th centuries. Churchification, Kaufmann submits, is not the strategy of an obscurantist leadership that deviates from modernity – that is to say: absolutism in a democratic age –, but should be seen as 'the response, structurally determined throughout, to major developmental tendencies in modern society', i.e., to increased social differentiation.[42]

While Kaufmann, in his analysis of Catholicism, focuses mainly on developments in ecclesiastical organisation, Gabriel, in his book *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne* of 1992, draws on the perspective of modernisation theory to sketch the growth of Catholicism's new social profile after 1800 as a whole. In the 19th century, Gabriel argues, the Catholic sub-tradition of Christianity developed a specific social form, which he calls 'modern Catholicism'. This social form is characterised by (a) the development of a characteristic religious frame of reference, namely neo-scholasticism, (b) the modernisation and sacralisation of new organisational structures in the church,[43] and (c) the immersion of Catholics in a Catholic milieu stretching over a network of Catholic associations and organisations, and a dense ritualisation of everyday life.[44] After 1960, the social context again changed fundamentally. Industrial modernity was overtaken by what is variously called high modernity, reflexive modernity, or post-modernity. Within this framework, the form of Catholicism that had functioned until then also became redundant.[45] Gabriel then seeks to trace processes of restructuring in contemporary Catholicism, in the expectation that a new social form, which he calls pluralist Catholicism, is emerging.[46]

[42] Kaufmann, *Kirche begreifen*, 68.
[43] See Kaufmann's already cited works.
[44] Gabriel, *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne*, 80–81.
[45] Gabriel, *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne*, 163ff.
[46] Gabriel, *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne*, 177ff.

Anyone who compares these analyses of Gabriel and Kaufmann with my remarks about religious modernisation, will soon realise my debt to these two authors. What I am in fact proposing, is a radicalisation of the approach in terms of the theory of modernisation as presented by Kaufmann and Gabriel. Both authors still hold on to certain remnants of the old opposition between religion and modernity. Such mementoes are, in my view, unnecessary.

Thus Kaufmann, with the intention of furthering 'the demythologisation of modernity',[17] seeks to develop a more accurate account of the opposition between religion and modernity. Because religion is tradition-oriented, he argues, it functions as a welcome contrasting principle vis-à-vis modernity, which indicates and helps to legitimise a situation of constant change.[18] However, this more precise explication of the contrast – an orientation towards tradition and change respectively – amounts to an emptying of the concepts of religion and modernity. In his substantive analysis, therefore, these concepts become superfluous. There, Kaufmann replaces them with two other concepts. Instead of religion, he speaks, concretely, of Christianity, and instead of modernity, he prefers 'Neuzeit', i.e., 'the modern era'. While he offers an exemplary analysis of the relation between Christianity (Catholicism) and 'Neuzeit' in terms of modernisation theory, he interprets that same relation at the more abstract level as an opposition between religion and modernity. This conflicting use of two sets of concepts that address the same phenomenon at different levels of abstraction is untenable.

Gabriel goes further, and speaks consistently of modernity and modernisation. Yet he too is unwilling to recognise modern religion as fully modern. Rather, he sees it as 'an amalgam of traditionality and modernity'.[19] In Gabriel's view, religion retains more traditional elements than does modern politics, for example. And within Catholicism, the Catholic Church exhibits more traditional traits than do the extra-ecclesiastical Catholic associations. I would question both theses. After 1800, religion was transformed just as fundamentally as was politics. It was the modernisation of the church during the 19th

[17] Kaufmann, 'Religion und Modernität', 284.
[18] Kaufmann, 'Religion und Modernität', esp. 307.
[19] Gabriel, *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne*, 16.

century which provided the foundation for the establishment and stabilisation of lay associations after 1870.[50]

More generally, I do not regard the churches' regular recourse to tradition as counter to the thesis of the modern character of the church. There are many and various traditions within modern societies. Just as they are seen as part of modernity, so religious traditions should be also. Moreover, the churches turn to traditions in response to current, modern challenges; they reinterpret them within prevailing, modern horizons, and they use them to stabilise their own identity, which is always being newly constructed within the modern context. Therefore, let us bury once and for all the antithetical view, which, ever since the Enlightenment, has opposed religion to modernity.

III. *Summary*

I use the concepts of modernity and the modern to indicate a specific, historical social formation, namely that of the period after 1800. It can be further divided into two phases: industrial modernity (1800–1960) and globalised modernity (from 1960 onwards) – also known as post-modernity or, as Beck calls it, second or reflexive modernity.[51] The period between 1500 and 1800, or early modernity, can be regarded as a transitional era. As a form of society, modernity succeeds the agrarian civilisations (3000 BCE–1500 CE).

In accordance with this understanding of modernity as an epoch, modern society as a whole should be viewed as modern, so that one cannot reserve modernity as a qualification for particular parts or driving forces, while excluding the remainder as backward remnants of the old order. The development of modernity is the result of a flexible structure, which generates much room for change, and is characterised by functional differentiation, thriving formal organisations and individualisation on the one hand, and the actual thought and action of *all* individuals and groups on the other. Religion – a

[50] See J. Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, Princeton 1984.
[51] U. Beck, *Risikogesellschaft; Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, Frankfurt/Main 1986.

multi-layered religious field – is one domain among others, in which modern society unfolds. In the same vein, the individual world religions are also modernised. It is true, of course, that many adherents of religion have been, and still are, highly critical of modernity. However, the critique of modernity is by no means confined to religious circles. Moreover, this critique takes place at the discursive or interpretative level. It does not by any means exclude its rootedness in modernity, but rather includes it.

CHAPTER FIVE

MODERNITY AND THE CRISIS OF SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY IN THE 19TH CENTURY. THE CASE OF PAPAL INFALLIBILITY

Anton Houtepen

Introduction: Tradition and Identity

Religion, not unlike science and art, involves a double concern: to pass on the important experience and knowledge gained in the past and to work towards innovation and the design of the future. This is what Dilthey called 'hermeneutics of life' to be inherited and to be passed on through the mediation of 'the written records of human existence and their interpretation'.[1] Such hermeneutics of life, though culminating in philology, exegesis and critical history, may nevertheless offer both archaeological, genealogical and teleological skills for the solution of existential problems of our times as well: we must remember and commemorate our past, know where we come from and what we should do in order to survive. Those skills seem foundational in the process of identity-construction, be it of individuals or groups, of particular theologians or religious traditions. They determine the style of an artist or of schools of art and even the practice of a scientific discipline or a department in a faculty.

In religion and theology, we summarize both concerns under the key-terms of tradition and renewal, but the first of these terms, rightly understood, implies the second: tradition is a process of ongoing,

[1] W. Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. V, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Stuttgart 1964. Dilthey defined hermeneutics as 'the theory about the art of understanding of scriptural fixated expressions of life', or, in a more descriptive way, as follows: 'As the life of the mind finds its complete, exhaustive and therefore objectively comprehensible expression in language, explication culminates in the interpretation of the written records of human existence. This art is the basis of philology. The science of this art is hermeneutics'. Cf. 'The Understanding of Other Persons and their Life-Expressions' in: K. Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *The Hermeneutics Reader*, London 1986, 152–164.